

July 26, 2023

Comptroller General  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W., Room 7100  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

As the nation's largest corrections system, the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) is responsible for the care, custody and safety of approximately 159,000 incarcerated people. BOP is also responsible for preparing incarcerated people to reenter the community.<sup>1</sup> This includes about 14,000 people in home confinement or Residential Reentry Centers (RRCs)—also known as halfway houses.

In fiscal year 2022, BOP spent over \$440 million to contract with RRCs—which are overseen by field offices within BOP's Residential Reentry Management Branch—to provide assistance to people who are nearing release.<sup>2</sup> According to BOP, RRCs are to provide a safe, structured, supervised environment, as well as employment counseling, job placement, financial management assistance, and other programs and services. BOP also uses these contracts to facilitate the supervision of certain individuals it places in home confinement. BOP may place incarcerated people in one of the over 190 RRCs throughout the country and Puerto Rico.

Individuals living in RRCs have to meet many requirements, and BOP imposes a number of requirements on the RRCs through the provider contract. For example, according to BOP's website, residents of RRCs are expected to be employed at least 40 hours a week within 15 calendar days after their arrival at the RRC. Upon employment, these residents are required to pay a subsistence fee to help cover the cost of their stay at the RRC (generally about 25 percent of their gross income). However, as reported by the National Conference of State Legislators, people reentering the community often face barriers when obtaining employment due to difficulties acquiring identification documents.<sup>3</sup> Without proper identification, securing a job is more challenging, and likewise, meeting the obligation to pay a subsistence fee is challenging. According to a December 2022 GAO report, about 32 percent of people who were transferred to an RRC from 2018 through 2021 did not have a birth certification, social security card, or photo identification (i.e., driver's license).<sup>4</sup> GAO reported that although BOP requires RRCs to assist residents with obtaining identification documents, BOP does not collect data on who is assisted by the RRCs.

In addition, BOP also generally pays for health care services RRC residents receive. For residents designated as having no or limited health needs, BOP has generally delegated health care reentry assistance responsibilities to RRCs. Under their contracts with BOP, RRCs are required to provide the following to both residents of RRCs and individuals under home confinement: (1) information on applying for health coverage, (2) access to phone and internet as needed to complete applications for health coverage, and (3) opportunity to access medical care and treatment while a resident of the RRC.

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<sup>1</sup>Incarcerated people can reenter the community directly from a BOP facility—which BOP refers to as a full-term release—or with a period of pre-release custody either as a resident in an RRC or under home confinement.

<sup>2</sup>BOP operates 23 Residential Reentry Management offices across the nation which, among other things, are to monitor the performance of RRCs within their jurisdiction and administer contracts for RRCs and community-based programs.

<sup>3</sup>Hartman, Michael, *Providing Identification for Those Released From Incarceration*, National Conference of State Legislatures, April 2022.

<sup>4</sup>GAO, *Bureau of Prisons: Opportunities Exist to Better Assist Incarcerated People with Obtaining ID Documents Prior to Release*, [GAO-23-105302](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 8, 2022).

According to a February 2023 GAO report, RRCs must survey each resident upon exit to determine if the resident applied for health coverage, but BOP does not consistently collect or analyze this information.<sup>5</sup>

In light of the requirements placed on RRCs and the issues identified in the various GAO reports, we are concerned about BOP's efforts to provide oversight and ensure the quality of services provided by RRCs. This is further heightened as BOP implements the First Step Act of 2018—which states that BOP shall, to the extent practicable, place incarcerated people with lower risk levels and lower needs on home confinement for the maximum amount of time permitted.<sup>6</sup> According to BOP's fiscal year 2024 Congressional Budget Justification, since the passage of the First Step Act, BOP has increased capacity of RRCs by 1,570 beds, and additional growth is anticipated.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, we request that the GAO collect information and report on the following information related to federally-contracted RRCs:

1. How does BOP determine the number and locations of RRCs that are needed?
2. What reentry related services and programs do RRCs provide to its residents or people in home confinement, and how do they differ across RRCs?
3. How does BOP monitor RRCs' performance and compliance with contract agreements, and what does BOP do with the findings of these monitoring efforts?
4. What is known about the effectiveness of the services and programs provided by federally-contracted RRCs in helping to reduce recidivism?
5. What, if any, mechanisms exist for RRCs residents or people in home confinement to file complaints, and how does BOP address such complaints?

Thank you for your help in addressing these issues. We would appreciate ongoing briefings as you conduct your work. If you have any questions concerning this request, please contact Alexander Chanock with Rep. Trone's office at [alexander.chanock@mail.house.gov](mailto:alexander.chanock@mail.house.gov).

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,



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David J. Trone  
Member of Congress



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Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress

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<sup>5</sup>GAO, *Bureau of Prisons: Assessment of Health Care Reentry Policies and Procedures Needed*, [GAO-23-105610](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 27, 2023).

<sup>6</sup>18 U.S.C. § 3624(c)(2). The First Step Act also requires BOP to deliver programs that lower incarcerated individuals' risk of recidivism. It also offers opportunities for certain individuals to earn First Step Act time credits that may reduce the amount of time an inmate is in a BOP facility. According to the First Step Act, people are to be able to continue to earn these time credits while residing in an RRC or in home confinement.

<sup>7</sup>In addition, certain individuals released under the First Step Act may be placed in the community for a longer period if they earn First Step Act time credits.



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Kelly Armstrong  
Member of Congress



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John H. Rutherford  
Member of Congress



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Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
Member of Congress